SECTION I
PURPOSE AND NEED FOR PROPOSED ACTION

1.1 STATEMENT OF PROJECT PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of the project is to provide a safe and efficient transportation corridor having national, state, regional and local importance for State Trunk Highway (STH) 26 while avoiding and minimizing adverse environmental disturbances. STH 26 accommodates the commodity transport of goods and services as a federal and/or state truck route, and provides communities along the corridor with access to local and regional services.

An alternative that satisfies the project purpose should reduce congestion and travel time, enhance safety, provide an adequate level of service for forecast traffic volumes, support local community needs and interests, and accommodate regional transportation needs of those communities along STH 26.

The project is needed because:

- **STH 26 is a route of national, state, and regional importance.** Due to the importance of the route, STH 26 is included in the National Highway System (NHS). It is classified as a Principal Arterial for through traffic and commodities transport, linking the communities along it. It also links industrial and commercial centers in the Green Bay-Oshkosh and Fox River Valley area to the Janesville-Beloit area and IH 90 connections to the south. The STH 26 route is an alternate route for traffic as congestion in the Milwaukee area increases. In addition, STH 26 is a major truck route link with IH 94 between Milwaukee and Madison and IH 90 at Janesville. The highway is designated as a federal and/or state long-truck route, allowing tractor-semitrailer combinations up to 65 feet (22 m) in length. It is the only continuous north-south state designated long-truck route in Jefferson and Waukesha counties.

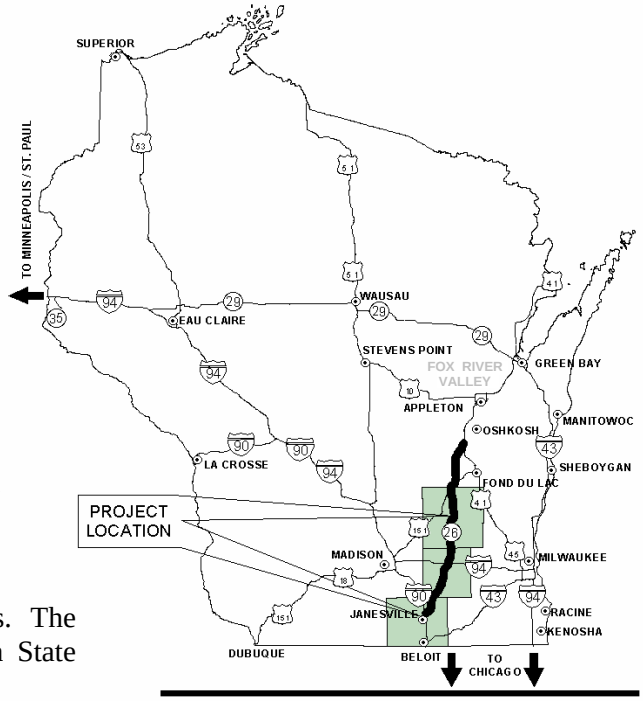


Figure 1.1 Project Location Map

STH 26 is designated as a Connector route in the Wisconsin Department of Transportation's (WisDOT) *Corridors 2020* plan. As a Connector, STH 26 serves regional trade centers, handles high truck volumes, and provides a critical service link for agricultural, trade, manufacturing and recreational centers. The *Corridors 2020* plan is part of the Wisconsin State Highway Plan adopted in February 2000.

STH 26 links six cities and villages within the project limits including Janesville, Milton, Fort Atkinson, Jefferson, Johnson Creek, and Watertown. These include some of the largest communities within Rock, Jefferson, and Dodge Counties. The route provides direct connection to IHs 90 and 94, USHs 12 and 18, and STHs 59, 106, 19, 16, and 60.

STH 26 serves an area that has historically been an area of high population growth. Four of the five counties that the route crosses exceeded the state growth rate of 7 percent from 1990 to 1998. STH 26 also provides regional access to schools, health care, and shopping facilities. STH 26 connects with IH 94 thus providing the region access to metropolitan services available in Madison and Milwaukee.

- **STH 26 is a route of local importance.** STH 26 provides mobility for residents within communities, and serves area businesses, industry, and agricultural needs. Within the study area from Janesville to Watertown, STH 26 is the major north-south urban arterial in the communities of Milton, Jefferson, Johnson Creek, and Watertown, thus serving both through and local traffic. STH 26 is the major state highway directly linking these local communities and rural areas to points north and south, and indirectly linking them to points east and west through intersecting highways.

- **Existing and forecasted traffic volumes are high.** The Wisconsin State Highway Plan notes the segment of STH 26 included in this EIS between Milton and Watertown as having traffic congestion levels of Severe to Moderate in the year 2020 if no capacity expansion occurs. The existing traffic volumes along the STH 26 study corridor range from 6,700 vehicles per day (vpd) on the Fort Atkinson bypass to 20,400 vpd in the City of Jefferson. Traffic volumes are expected to increase approximately 85 to 100 percent by the year 2028. This will result in traffic volumes two to three times higher than the recommended threshold for a two-lane roadway in urban and rural areas. Trucks account for approximately 11-18 percent of the average daily traffic (ADT), confirming the importance of STH 26 as a major truck route. Existing urban truck volumes range from 1,360 vpd in Milton to 2,500 vpd in Jefferson. The high truck volumes, particularly in the downtown areas, disrupt traffic flow and increase hazards to traffic as well as pedestrians.

- **Capacity and level of service are substandard.** As a result of the high traffic volumes, capacity of the existing roadway can not achieve an acceptable level of service. The majority of segments will operate at LOS "E" or LOS "F" in the design year 2028, which is characterized by long backups and delay causing driver frustration and forced vehicle maneuvers. The STH 26 corridor will not operate efficiently if no improvements are made to the existing roadway. Traffic will likely divert to local systems resulting in increased safety problems in the corridor and adjacent local road systems.

- **Crash rates are high in urban areas.** Crashes on STH 26 exceed the statewide average crash rates in the urban areas of Jefferson, Johnson Creek, and Watertown, as well as in the rural section between Janesville and Milton. This rural section was improved in 1999 to a four-lane divided highway. Deficiencies in the roadway characteristics, such as a high number of urban access points causing stop-and-go vehicle maneuvers, along with the high traffic volumes contribute to the crash potential. It is likely that crash frequency will increase if no improvements are made to the existing roadway.

- **Local communities support regional corridor function for STH 26.** Adopted plans in the project area support the importance of STH 26 as a regional transportation facility, linking regional communities to each other and linking communities to other parts of the state and national transportation systems. Public Information Meetings and Study Committee Meetings confirm the local interest in providing a corridor system that accommodates the local and regional transportation needs of the communities along STH 26.

1.2 PROJECT BACKGROUND

1.2.1 Project Location

The section of State Trunk Highway (STH) 26 evaluated in this document is located in south central Wisconsin in Rock, Jefferson, and Dodge Counties. The project begins on the north side of Janesville at IH 90 and extends north about 48 miles (77 km) to approximately 9 miles (15 km) north of Watertown at STH 60 East. Within the project limits, STH 26 passes through the City of Milton, bypasses the City of Fort Atkinson, and passes through the City of Jefferson, Village of Johnson Creek, and City of Watertown (Figure 1.2.1). In the rural areas, STH 26 passes through the Towns of Harmony, Milton, Koshkonong, Jefferson, Aztalan, Farmington, Watertown, Emmet, and Clyman.

1.2.2 Termini and Study Segments

The south project terminus is at STH 26 intersection with IH 90, a major highway having substantial traffic volumes. The north project terminus is north of Watertown on STH 26 at STH 60 East. At this point, STH 26 connects with a significant east-west highway, and traffic volumes north of this intersection decrease substantially. STH 16 runs concurrent with STH 26 from north of Watertown to STH 60 West, and STH 60 runs concurrent with STH 26 for 1.0 miles (1.6 km) between STH 60 West and STH 60 East, thus adding to the traffic volumes in these sections.

The Wisconsin State Highway Plan, adopted in February 2000, notes STH 26 as a Corridors 2020 Connector route with Severe to Moderate Congestion levels between Milton and Watertown if no capacity expansion occurs. This plan also notes the segment of STH 26 between STH 60 East (northern project termini) and USH 151 as Not Congested, and designates that segment of highway as a corridor for potential passing lanes.

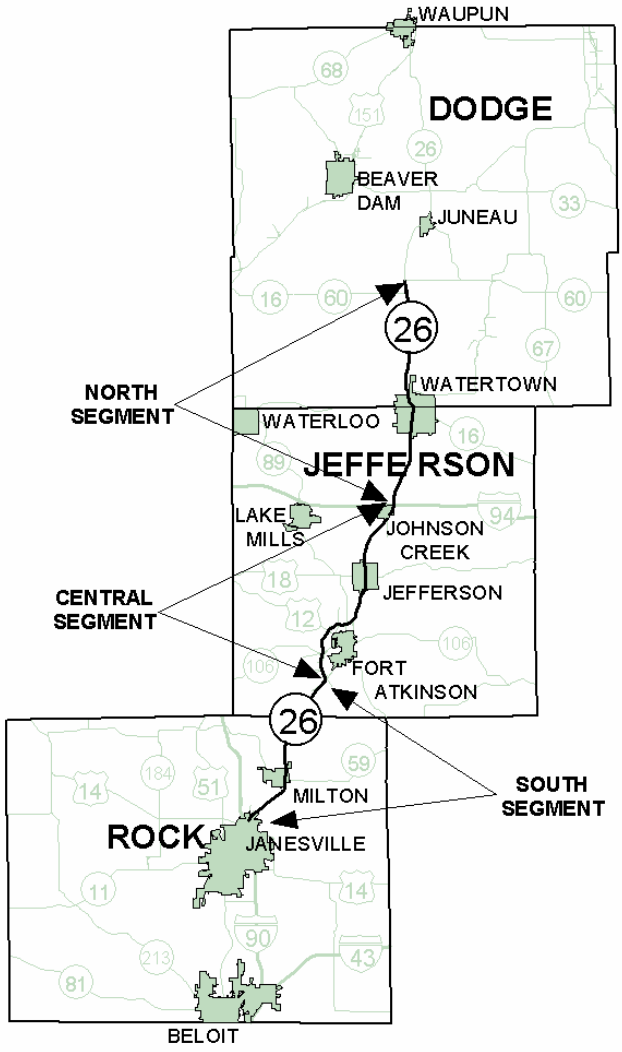


Figure 1.2.1 Project Location Map

The segment of STH 26 between IH 90 and STH 60 East is of sufficient length to address environmental matters on a broad scope, has independent utility, and does not require or preclude development of the remaining section or future options. Both IH 90 and STH 60 East are logical termini for comparison of alternatives.

For planning purposes and to address local concerns and interests, the overall STH 26 corridor project has been divided into three study area segments (Figure 1.2.1).

1.2.2.1 South Segment (Segment 1 – Janesville to Fort Atkinson)

The south segment begins at the Interstate 90/STH 26 interchange in Janesville in Rock County (south project terminus) and ends at the Business 26/STH 26 interchange south of Fort Atkinson in Jefferson County (Figure 1.2.2.1). This segment is about 13.6 miles (22.0 km) in length, and includes the City of Milton. The 3.9-mile (6.3-km) section of STH 26 from CTH Y north of Janesville to just south of STH 59 East in Milton was improved in 1999 from a two-lane rural roadway to a four-lane divided highway having expressway access standards. This section is included within the south segment study termini. Additional lanes or capacity improvements are not part of this project, but access control modifications are planned and included in this EIS that will permit the route to operate safely as traffic volumes increase. Included are side road closures, converting of at-grade intersections to interchanges, and placement of bridges over STH 26 for local mobility.

Figure 1.2.2.1 South Segment Location Map

1.2.2.2 Central Segment (Segment 2 – Fort Atkinson to Johnson Creek)

The central segment begins at the Business 26 / STH 26 interchange south of Fort Atkinson and ends at Baneck Lane north of Johnson Creek in Jefferson County (Figure 1.2.2.2). This segment is about 17.5 miles (28.2 km) in length, and includes the existing Fort Atkinson Bypass, the City of Jefferson, and the Village of Johnson Creek.

The Fort Atkinson bypass, a 6.6-mile (10.8-km) section, was completed in 1995 as two lanes of an ultimate four-lane facility. Right-of-way for the ultimate four-lane facility was acquired at that time. Roadway grading for the four-lane facility has been completed.

The 2.7-mile (4.4-km) section of STH 26 at Johnson Creek between CTH Y and Baneck Lane was improved in 2001-2002 from a two-lane rural roadway to a four-lane divided highway. The IH 94/STH 26 interchange was modified as part of this improvement to accommodate the expansion of STH 26 and anticipated traffic growth in the area. This section is included within the central segment study termini, but is not included in the improvement alternative evaluations.

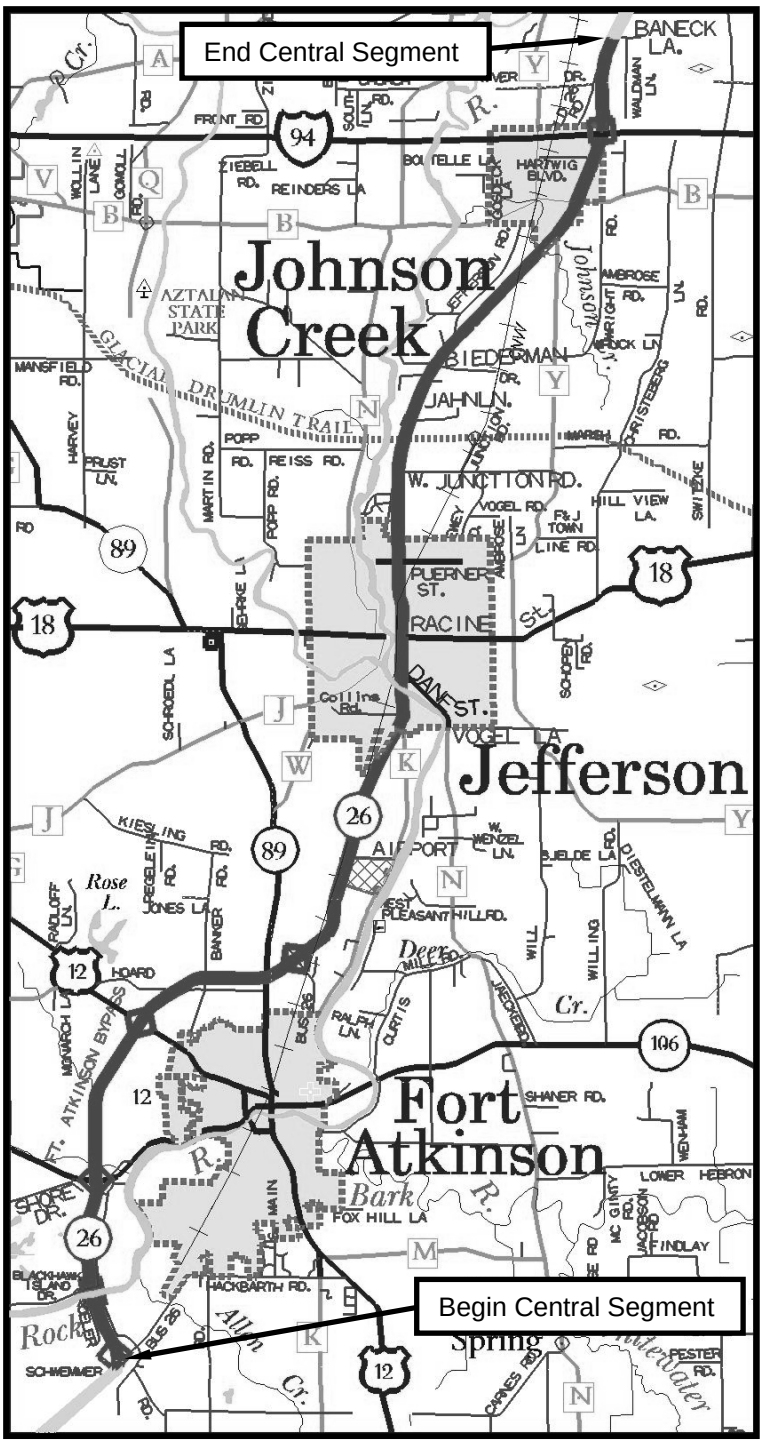


Figure 1.2.2.2 Central Segment Location Map

1.2.2.3 North Segment (Segment 3 – Johnson Creek to Watertown)

The north segment (Figure 1.2.2.3) begins north of Johnson Creek at Baneck Lane in Jefferson County and ends north of Watertown at STH 60 East in Dodge County (north project terminus). This segment is about 17.2 miles (27.7 km) in length, and includes the City of Watertown.

An urban section in the City of Watertown from the south city limits to STH 19 was constructed in 2003 as a four-lane divided urban cross-section with turn lanes at major intersections.

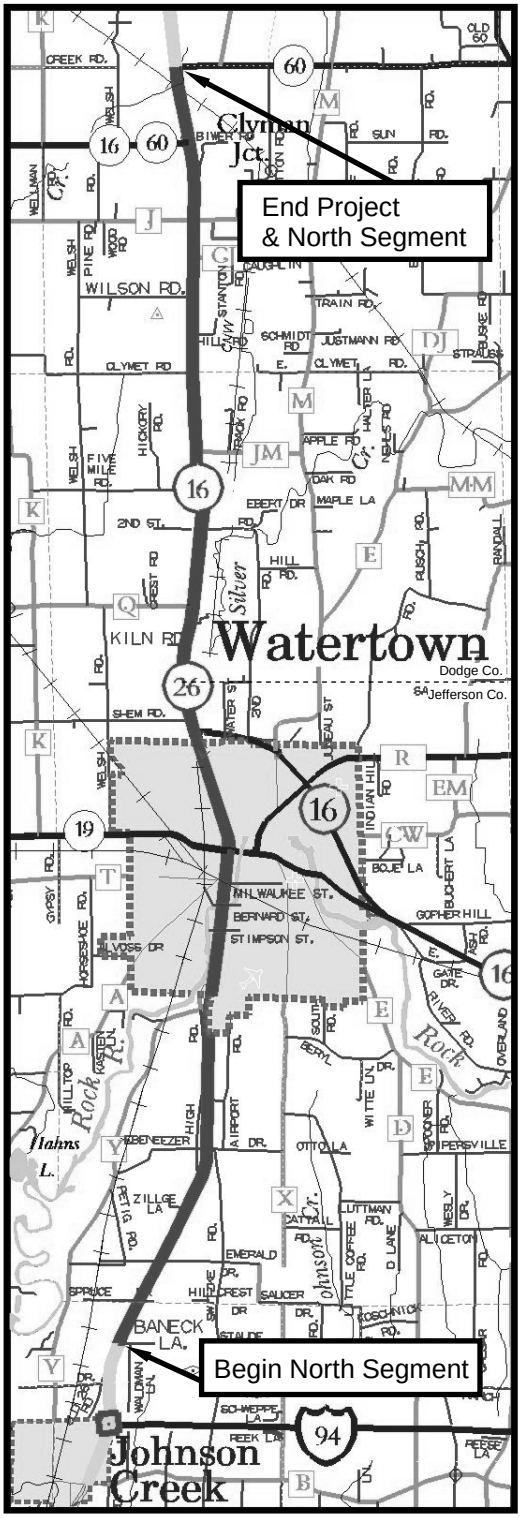


Figure 1.2.2.3 North Segment Location Map

1.2.3 Project Status

State and federal moneys may fund the proposed improvement. The improvement was presented to the State Transportation Projects Commission (TPC) for consideration as a major project in the fall of 2000, and it has been approved for funding. It is anticipated that construction would not occur until at least 2008, with right-of-way acquisition starting in earlier years. For the purpose of this study, the construction year is therefore designated as 2008, and the design year as 2028. Sections of STH 26 will likely be staged for improvement over a period of time, as funds become available.

1.3 NEED FOR PROJECT

1.3.1 Route Importance and System Linkage

1.3.1.1 National and State Importance

STH 26 serves as a major north-south route in south central Wisconsin, intersecting IH 90 at Janesville, IH 94 midway between Madison and Milwaukee at Johnson Creek, and USH 151 near Waupun. The entire route extends approximately 98 miles (158 km) from US Highway (USH) 51 in Janesville north to USH 41 near Oshkosh.

Due to its importance, the entire route is included in the National Highway System (NHS). The NHS includes all Interstate routes, a large percentage of roads classified as Rural and Urban Principal Arterials, and roads important for national defense.

STH 26 is classified as a Principal Arterial that serves through traffic and commodities transport, linking the communities along it, points to the south of Janesville, and the industrial and manufacturing centers in the Green Bay-Oshkosh and Fox River Valley area to the north. Because it is the most direct route between the Fox River Valley and IH 90 at Janesville, STH 26 is a preferred travel route from the Fox River Valley to points south and west of Janesville.

STH 26 from IH 90 at Janesville to USH 151 at Waupun is designated as a state long-truck route, which allows tractor-semitrailer combinations up to 65 feet (22 m) in length to use the corridor. STH 26 is also a federal truck route from IH 94 in Johnson Creek to STH 16 in Watertown. It is the only continuous north-south state designated long-truck route in Jefferson and Waukesha counties. Truck route designation increases the importance of the route operating safely and efficiently.

In recognition of its statewide importance, STH 26 is designated as a Connector highway in the Wisconsin Department of Transportation's (WisDOT) *Corridors 2020* plan. This plan was developed to provide a network of high quality highways that link the economic centers in the State with each other and to the National Highway System. This 3,650-mile (5,900-km) system consists of multilane backbone highways and high quality connectors (Figure 1.3.1.1).

The primary purpose of the connector system is to link other significant economic and tourism centers to the backbone system, thus more closely integrating them into the statewide and national transportation systems.

Although STH 26 was not selected as a backbone route, major segments of the route met many of the criteria for backbone candidates. This shows that STH 26 is an important connector route nearing backbone status.

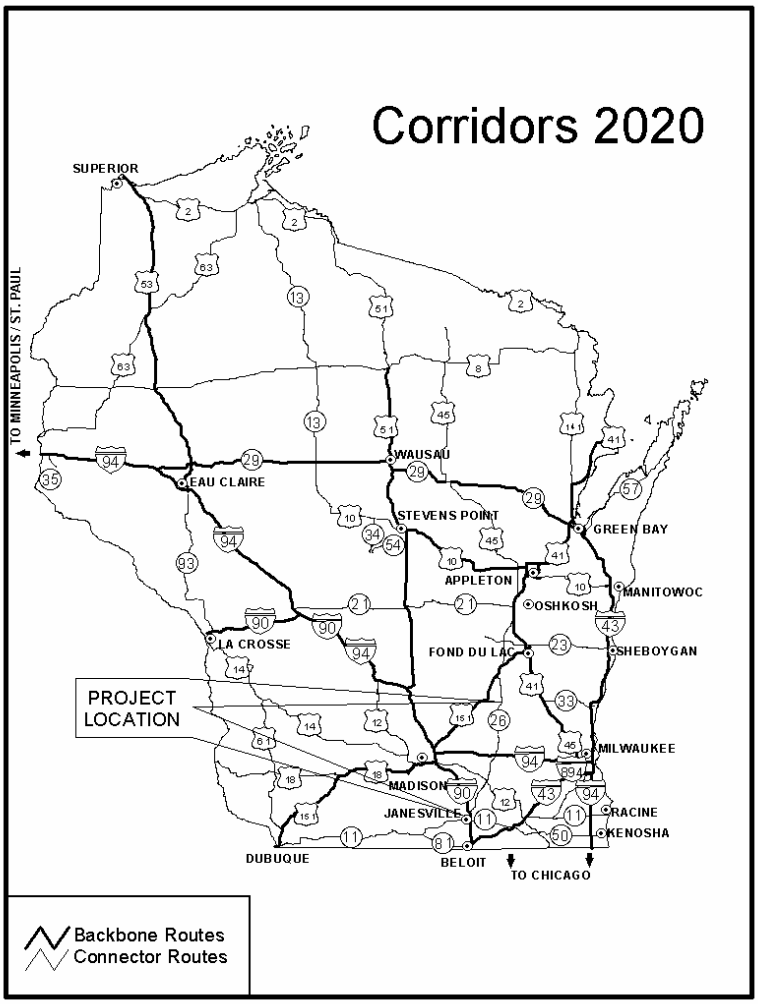


Figure 1.3.1.1 WisDOT Corridors 2020 Map

Several factors demonstrate the statewide importance of the STH 26 route and why it was identified as a connector highway. The following is a brief description of these factors:

a) **Service to Trade Centers** - STH 26 serves as a direct link to various identified district, urban, and regional trade centers, including Janesville, Fort Atkinson, Watertown, Waupun, and Oshkosh. With

the location of STH 26 north and south of IH 94 as well as its central location between Madison and Milwaukee, this highway also provides direct access to the interstate system servicing these two major Wisconsin metropolitan trade centers.

b) **Truck Volume** – High truck volumes result in an increased demand on the highway system, leading to capacity, maintenance, and safety concerns. Connector highways include segments with an average daily truck volume greater than 625 in 1994 or 1,050 in 2020. Many segments of STH 26 between Milton and Watertown already have daily truck volumes exceeding 1,500 in 1999. In the *Corridors 2020* plan, average daily truck volume greater than 1,250 is a backbone route criterion. The amount of truck traffic is a measure of the extent to which a highway serves regional, industrial, and agricultural needs.

c) **Service to Manufacturing Centers** – Manufacturing centers depend on efficient transportation networks in order to import and export goods and services. Connector routes provide direct service to secondary manufacturing counties as well as links to any primary manufacturing counties. STH 26 services Dodge, Jefferson, and Fond du Lac Counties, which are secondary manufacturing centers, as well as Rock and Winnebago Counties, which are primary manufacturing centers.

d) **Service to Recreation and Tourism Centers** - Recreation and tourism are highly dependent upon highway transportation for safe and convenient travel to recreational attractions and vacation areas. STH 26 is a major north-south route passing through Rock, Jefferson, and Dodge Counties, which have many recreation/tourism destinations, and it provides direct service to Fond du Lac and Winnebago Counties, which are secondary recreation/tourism centers.

e) **Service to Agricultural Centers** – Agricultural centers are vital to Wisconsin's economy. Connector routes were chosen to include connections to secondary counties in addition to any primary counties not served by the backbone routes. STH 26 is a major agricultural corridor as it passes through the primary counties of Rock, Jefferson, Dodge, and Fond du Lac. STH 26 also connects to Winnebago County, which is a secondary county.

1.3.1.2 Regional Importance

In addition to STH 26 being an important statewide route, it also serves as a significant regional route in south central Wisconsin. STH 26 links six cities or villages within the project limits including Janesville, Milton, Fort Atkinson, Jefferson, Johnson Creek, and Watertown. These include some of the largest communities within Rock, Jefferson, and Dodge Counties. This route provides direct connections to IHs 90 and 94, USHs 12 and 18, and STHs 59, 106, 19, 16, and 60.

STH 26 provides the project area communities with connections to the National Highway System (Figure 1.1):

- IH 90 at Janesville - IH 90 connects STH 26 at Janesville with Madison, Wisconsin Dells, La Crosse, Beloit, and the Chicago metropolitan area.
- IH 94 at Johnson Creek - IH 94 connects STH 26 to Madison, Minneapolis/St. Paul, Milwaukee, and Chicago.
- USH 151 at Waupun - USH 151 is a major southwest-northeast backbone route that connects STH 26 to Madison, Fond du Lac, and Manitowoc.
- USH 41 at Oshkosh - USH 41 is a major north-south backbone route that connects STH 26 to the Fox River Valley areas including Appleton, Green Bay, and Marinette.

Analysis of population trends in Wisconsin from 1990 to 1998 identified South Central Wisconsin as an area of high population growth. Four of the five counties that STH 26 crosses exceeded the state growth rate of 7 percent from 1990 to 1998. The City of Janesville, located at the southern limits of STH 26, is one of the top ten population centers in Wisconsin. Janesville had the second highest growth rate (12.3 percent) from 1990-1997 out of the top 20 population centers in Wisconsin. As population increases continue in this region, more traffic will be generated along the STH 26 corridor.

STH 26 provides regional access to schools, health care, and shopping facilities. Numerous commercial establishments are located within the communities along the corridor route. Hospitals are located in Janesville, Fort Atkinson, and Watertown. Major employment centers are located in communities within the project limits including 18 employers having greater than 400 employees. General Motors in Janesville is the largest employer in the area with 5,500 employees.

STH 26's connection with IH 94 provides the region with access to Wisconsin's two largest population centers with metropolitan services including cultural activities, sporting events, health care, and alternative modes of transportation (bus, train, airplane) available in Madison and Milwaukee. Additional regional attractions to the area include Lake Koshkonong, Aztalan State Park, the Historic Milton House, and the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater.

1.3.1.3 Local Importance

In addition to serving as a major regional transportation link, STH 26 serves as a local transportation corridor for the communities it passes through. Although STH 26 has controlled access, local roads and private access intersect with the highway to a varying degree along most of its length. This route provides mobility for residents within the communities, and serves area business, industry, and agricultural needs.

STH 26 is the major north-south urban arterial in the cities of Milton, Jefferson, and Watertown and the Village of Johnson Creek. STH 26 passes through a narrow right-of-way in older historic sections of Milton, Jefferson, and Watertown where an estimated 230 private residential access points exist. Increasing through traffic and truck traffic hinder the local function of the road and act as a barrier separating parts of the community to the east and west of STH 26. Jefferson has 33 public road intersections with STH 26 and Watertown has 26 such intersections, many of which are in historic downtown areas. In Milton, there are 10 public road intersections with STH 26.

STH 26 passes through more recently developed areas in Janesville and Johnson Creek. These sections of the highway have had more access control and were built with wider right-of-ways than in Milton, Jefferson, and Watertown.

Fort Atkinson was bypassed by STH 26 in 1995 and is served by four interchanges. Currently, there are two at-grade intersections located along the bypass at Banker and Hoard Roads. The Fort Atkinson Bypass EIS stated that when the bypass is upgraded to four lanes, these two intersections will be grade separated.

To the extent that the route continues to be congested, safety, mobility, and economic development within each community will be adversely affected.

1.3.2 Existing and Future Traffic Volumes

Existing and forecasted average daily traffic (ADT) for various sections of STH 26 are shown in Table 1.3.2-1.

TABLE 1.3.2-1
STH 26 EXISTING AND FORECASTED ADT

Segment	Segment Type	Existing ADT	2008 ADT (4)	2028 ADT (4)
SOUTH SEGMENT (Janesville to Fort Atkinson)				
IH 90 to CTH Y	Urban	(2) 30,700	38,000	54,000
CTH Y to Townline Road	Rural	(2) 18,100	23,500	33,000
Townline Road to STH 59 West – ***Milton***	Urban	(2) 13,800	17,500	25,000
STH 59 West to Bowers Lake Road – ***Milton***	Urban	(2) 9,700	12,000	18,500
Bowers Lake Road to S. Bus. 26 Interchange	Rural	(2) 10,400	14,500	20,000
CENTRAL SEGMENT (Fort Atkinson to Johnson Creek)				
S. Bus. 26 to N. Bus. 26 (Fort Atkinson Bypass)	Rural	(1) 6,700	9,500	14,000
N. Bus. 26 Interchange to Collins Road	Rural	(1) 10,700	14,500	21,000
Collins Road to CTH N – ***Jefferson***	Urban	(1) 20,400	27,000	38,000
CTH N to USH 18 – ***Jefferson***	Urban	(1) 15,900	22,000	31,000
USH 18 to Puerner Street – ***Jefferson***	Urban	(1) 14,700	19,500	28,000
Puerner Street to CTH Y	Rural	(2) 10,400	14,500	21,000
CTH Y to Hartwig Blvd. – ***Johnson Creek*** (3)	Urban	(1) 12,300	(3) 18,600	(3) 27,500
Hartwig Blvd. to Baneck Lane – ***Johnson Creek*** (3)	Urban	(1) 13,100	(3) 26,800	(3) 39,500
NORTH SEGMENT (Johnson Creek to STH 60 East)				
Baneck Lane to CTH Y	Rural	(2) 10,200	14,500	20,000
CTH Y to Bernard St. – ***Watertown***	Urban	(1) 14,800	19,500	28,000
Bernard Street to STH 19 – ***Watertown***	Urban	(1) 19,600	26,000	37,000
STH 19 to STH 16 – ***Watertown***	Urban	(1) 13,900	18,500	26,000
STH 16 to STH 60 East	Rural	(2) 8,500	11,000	15,500

(1) 1997 Average Daily Traffic (Wisconsin Highway Traffic Volume Data, March 1999)
(2) 1998 Average Daily Traffic (Wisconsin Highway Traffic Volume Data, March 1999)
(3) Improved in 2001-2002 as a four-lane divided highway. Projected traffic volumes are based on the 1998 Traffic Study Report for STH 26/I-94 Interchange improvement.
(4) Represents midpoint of projected ADT range.

The existing traffic volumes along the STH 26 study corridor range from 6,700 vehicles per day (vpd) on the Fort Atkinson Bypass to 20,400 vpd in the City of Jefferson. Traffic volumes are expected to increase approximately 85 to 300 percent by the design year 2028. This will result in traffic volumes ranging from 14,000 vpd on the Fort Atkinson Bypass to 39,500 vpd in the Village of Johnson Creek.

Trucks account for approximately 11–18 percent of the ADT, confirming the importance of STH 26 as a major truck route. Existing urban truck volumes range from 1,360 vpd in Milton to 2,500 vpd in Jefferson. See Table 1.3.2-2 for existing and forecasted truck volumes and percentages of ADT. The high truck volumes, particularly in the downtown areas, disrupt traffic flow and increase hazards to local and through traffic as well as pedestrians.

TABLE 1.3.2-2
STH 26 AVERAGE DAILY TRUCK VOLUMES

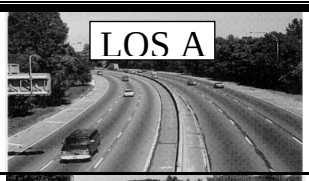
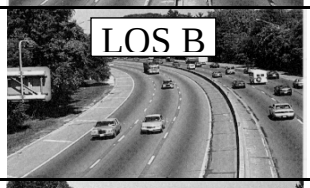
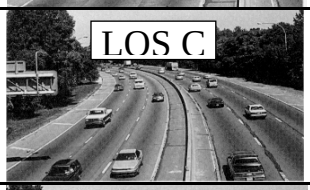
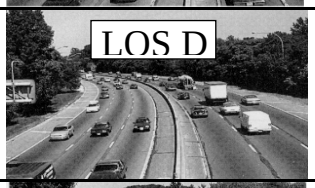
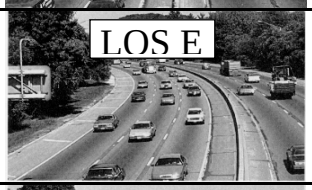
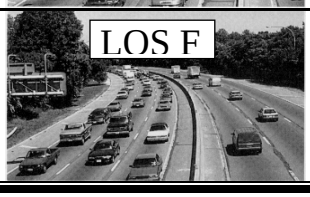
Segment	Segment Type	1999	2008	2028	% ADT
SOUTH SEGMENT (Janesville to Fort Atkinson)					
IH 90 to CTH Y	Urban	2,200	2,660	3,800	7
CTH Y to Townline Road	Rural	1,750	2,800	3,960	12
Townline Road to STH 59 West – ***Milton***	Urban	2,000	2,450	3,500	14
STH 59 West to Bowers Lake Road – ***Milton***	Urban	1,360	1,800	2,775	15
Bowers Lake Road to S. Bus. 26 Interchange	Rural	1,020	1,750	2,400	12
CENTRAL SEGMENT (Fort Atkinson to Johnson Creek)					
S. Bus. 26 to N. Bus. 26 (Fort Atkinson Bypass)	Rural	800	1,140	1,680	12
N. Bus. 26 Interchange to Collins Road	Rural	1,280	1,600	2,300	11
Collins Road to CTH N – ***Jefferson***	Urban	2,500	3,250	4,560	12
CTH N to USH 18 – ***Jefferson***	Urban	2,200	2,860	4,030	13
USH 18 to Puerner Street – ***Jefferson***	Urban	2,100	2,730	3,920	14
Puerner Street to CTH Y	Rural	1,700	2,320	3,360	16
CTH Y to Hartwig Blvd. – ***Johnson Creek***	Urban	1,800	2,800	4,125	15
Hartwig Blvd. to Baneck Lane – ***Johnson Creek***	Urban	2,000	4,020	5,925	15
NORTH SEGMENT (Johnson Creek to STH 60 East)					
Baneck Lane to CTH Y	Rural	1,580	2,175	3,000	15
CTH Y to Bernard St. – ***Watertown***	Urban	2,400	2,730	3,920	14
Bernard Street to STH 19 – ***Watertown***	Urban	1,900	2,860	4,070	11
STH 19 to STH 16 – ***Watertown***	Urban	1,600	3,300	4,680	18
STH 16 to STH 60 East	Rural	1,600	2,100	2,950	19

1.3.3 Capacity and Level of Service

Capacity analyses were conducted to determine existing 1999 and design year 2028 level-of-service (LOS) for various sections of the existing roadway. Roadway LOS is a measure of a highway's response to the traffic demands placed on it. Table 1.3.3-1 summarizes each LOS characteristic. Traffic factors such as ADT volumes, peak-hour volumes, truck percentages, posted speed limits, number of driving lanes, lane widths, vertical grades, passing opportunities, and access points affect the LOS. Levels range

from "A" to "F" in order of decreasing quality. The intermediate level "C" provides for stable operations, but traffic flow approaches the range in which small traffic increases will cause substantial deterioration in the LOS. Levels "A" and "B" are desirable while levels "D" through "F" are considered poor.

TABLE 1.3.3-1
LEVEL OF SERVICES CHARACTERISTICS

	Unrestricted free flow Drivers virtually unaffected by others High level of freedom to select speed and maneuver Excellent level of driver comfort and convenience
	Slightly restricted stable flow Drivers aware of use by others Slight restriction in speed and maneuvering Good level of driver comfort and convenience
	Moderately restricted stable flow Driver operation significantly affected by others Moderate restriction in speed and maneuvering Fair level of comfort and convenience
	Heavily restricted flow Driver operation completely affected by others Severe restriction in speed and maneuvering Poor level of driver comfort and convenience
	Unstable flow (approach flow > discharge flow) Slow speeds and traffic backups; some stoppage Total restriction in vehicle maneuvering High driver frustration
	Forced flow (approach flow > discharge flow) Stop and go movements with long backups and delay Forced vehicle maneuvers Maximum driver frustration

Source: Highway Capacity Manual

The results, summarized in Table 1.3.3-2, indicate that as traffic increases, the level of service will continue to deteriorate to unacceptable levels if no improvements are made. The majority of segments will operate at LOS "E" or LOS "F", which is characterized by slower travel speeds and stop-and-go operations resulting in long backups and delay causing driver frustration and forced vehicle maneuvers.

TABLE 1.3.3-2
STH 26 EXISTING AND FORECASTED LEVEL-OF-SERVICE

Segment	Segment Type	1999 LOS	2028 LOS
SOUTH SEGMENT (Janesville to Fort Atkinson)			
CTH Y to Townline Road [1]	Rural	A [1]	C [1]
Townline Road to STH 59 West – ***Milton***	Urban	D	F
STH 59 West to Bowers Lake Road – ***Milton***	Urban	C	F
Bowers Lake Road to S. Bus. 26 Interchange	Rural	D	E
CENTRAL SEGMENT (Fort Atkinson to Johnson Creek)			
S. Bus. 26 to N. Bus. 26 (Fort Atkinson Bypass)	Rural	C	E
N. Bus. 26 Interchange to Collins Road	Rural	D	E
Collins Road to CTH N – ***Jefferson*** [2]	Urban	B [2]	E
CTH N to USH 18 – ***Jefferson*** [2]	Urban	B [2]	F
USH 18 to Puerner Street – ***Jefferson*** [2]	Urban	B [2]	F
Puerner Street to CTH Y	Rural	D	E
CTH Y to Hartwig Blvd. – ***Johnson Creek*** [3]	Urban	C [3]	C [3]
Hartwig Blvd. to Baneck Lane – ***Johnson Creek*** [3]	Urban	C [3]	D [3]
NORTH SEGMENT (Johnson Creek to STH 60 East)			
Baneck Lane to CTH Y	Rural	D	E
CTH Y to Bernard Street – ***Watertown*** [4]	Urban	C	D [4]
Bernard Street to STH 19 – ***Watertown*** [4]	Urban	D	F [4]
STH 19 to STH 16 – ***Watertown***	Urban	D	F
STH 16 to STH 60 East	Rural	D	E

(1) Improved in 1999 to a four-lane divided highway.
(2) Improved in 1999 as a two-lane roadway with right and left turn lanes as warranted.
(3) Improved in 2001-2002 as a four-lane divided highway. LOS analysis represents data from 1998 Traffic Study Report for STH 26/I-94 Interchange improvement with a 2021 design year.
(4) Improved in 2003 as a four-lane divided highway. LOS analysis in 2028 includes programmed improvements.

Under these conditions it is likely that some traffic will divert to local city, town and county routes, placing additional traffic demands on routes not intended to function as a regional and state travel route. The STH 26 corridor will not operate efficiently and it is likely that crash frequency will increase if no improvements are made to the existing roadway.

According to WisDOT's Facilities Development Manual (FDM), a rural 2-lane roadway generally fails to meet minimally desirable LOS "C" when traffic volumes exceed 8,700 ADT on facilities with 12-foot (3.6-m) wide driving lanes and 10 percent trucks. Currently, 90 percent of the rural segments within the 48-mile (77-km) study corridor have traffic volumes exceeding 8,700 ADT, and all have greater than 10 percent truck volumes. By 2008, all rural segments will exceed the 8,700 ADT threshold. By the design year 2028, almost all rural segments will exceed the 8,700 ADT threshold by two to four times.

A 2-lane urban roadway falls below LOS "C" at 8,000 to 20,000 ADT depending on the design characteristics of the roadway according to WisDOT's FDM. Currently, both Jefferson and Watertown have traffic volumes within this range. By 2008, both Jefferson and Watertown will have segments in excess of the 20,000 ADT threshold. By the design year 2028, all urban segments within the study corridor will meet or exceed the ADT threshold.

1.3.4 Existing Highway Characteristics

1.3.4.1 Typical Sections – Rural

Within the 48-mile (77-km) study corridor, approximately 40 miles (64 km) consist of a rural typical section. The rural typical sections include about 36 miles of two-lane roadway with 12-foot (3.6-m) driving lanes and 6 to 10-foot (1.8 to 3.0-m) shoulders in addition to 4 miles (6.4 km) of four-lane divided roadway with 12-foot (3.6-m) driving lanes and 6-foot (1.8-m) inside and 10-foot (3.0-m) outside shoulders. The four-lane section is located from IH 90 to Milton. The two-lane rural sections do not have adequate capacity to handle the high current and future traffic volumes at an acceptable level of service "C." All two-lane rural sections are forecasted to operate at level of service "E" in the design year 2028.

1.3.4.2 Typical Sections – Urban

Urban sections within the study corridor consist of either two-lane or four-lane roadways. However, all urban sections do not have adequate capacity to handle the forecasted traffic volumes at an acceptable level of service "C." The majority of urban sections are forecasted to operate at levels of service "E" or "F" in the design year 2028.

Milton: From the south corporate limits to approximately 1000 feet (305 m) south of STH 59 East, the roadway consists of a four-lane divided section with 12-foot (3.6-m) driving lanes. The remaining urban section within Milton consists of a two-lane roadway with 12-foot (3.6-m) driving lanes.

Jefferson: The urban section within Jefferson operates as a two-lane roadway with 12-foot (3.6-m) driving lanes. Many segments have additional lanes to accommodate turn-lanes and on-street parking.

Johnson Creek: The urban section was improved in 2001-2002 as a four-lane divided roadway with 12-foot (3.6-m) driving lanes. Expressway access standards were applied which allow at-grade intersections at safe locations that meet spacing guidelines. Private and driveway access was not permitted. Coordinated traffic signals and a 45-mph (73-km/h) posted speed limit allow a better progression of vehicles and higher average travel speeds.

Watertown: The urban section within Watertown currently operates as a two-lane facility with 12-foot (3.6-m) driving lanes. The section from the south corporate limits to STH 19 was improved in 2003 as a four-lane roadway.

1.3.4.3 Horizontal Geometrics

Within the South Segment there are 27 horizontal curves in the rural areas. All curves meet or exceed the criteria, based on WisDOT Facilities Development Manual, for the posted speed limit of 55-mph (90-km/h). Between Milton and the Fort Atkinson bypass, three curves meet criteria for a 55-mph (90- km/h) design speed. The remaining 24 horizontal curves in the rural area meet criteria for 70-mph (113-km/h)

design speed. There are two curves in the urban area of Milton, both of which provide a design speed of 45-mph (73-km/h) or greater.

Within the Central Segment there are 22 horizontal curves in the rural areas. All curves meet or exceed the criteria for the posted speed limit of 55-mph (90-km/h). Along the Ft. Atkinson bypass, three curves meet criteria for 55-mph (90-km/h) design speed, and three curves meet criteria for 60-mph (97-km/h) design speed. The remaining 16 horizontal curves in the rural area meet criteria for 70-mph (113-km/h) design speed. There are two curves in the urban area of Jefferson, both of which provide a design speed of 45-mph (73-km/h) or greater.

Within the North Segment there are 23 horizontal curves in the rural areas. All curves meet or exceed the criteria for the posted speed limit of 55-mph (90-km/h). North of Watertown are four curves that meet criteria for 55-mph (90-km/h) design speed. The remaining 19 horizontal curves in the rural area meet criteria for 70-mph (113-km/h) design speed. There are 5 curves in the urban area of Watertown, all of which provide a design speed of 45-mph (73-km/h) or greater.

1.3.4.4 Vertical Geometrics

The existing terrain throughout the project is gently rolling. The maximum recommended grade for rural and urban arterials in rolling terrain with a design speed of 60-mph (97-km/h) or greater is 4 percent (AASHTO, 1994). Grades exceed 4 percent in two locations, one being 5 percent at CTH N north of Milton, and one being 4.5 percent at the Union Pacific Railroad structure just north of Jefferson.

The WisDOT's Highway Deficiency File shows six vertical curves with design speeds less than 46-mph (74-km/h) and two with a design speed between 46-55 mph (74-90 km/h), all of which are located in the rural area between Milton and the Ft. Atkinson bypass. All other vertical curves throughout the project provide a design speed of 55-mph (90-km/h) or greater.

1.3.4.5 Access

Access to STH 26 between IH 90 and the north side of Watertown is controlled by deed restrictions. North of Watertown, STH 26 is a controlled access highway under State Statutes 84.25.

In the 13.6-mile (22.0-km) South Segment there are approximately 82 rural and 64 urban access points along existing STH 26. Most access points are residential and farm driveways, including field driveways. In addition, there are approximately 19 commercial entrances and 28 public road intersections including two intersections with STH 59, one with CTH Y, and one with CTH N.

In the 17.5-mile (28.2-km) Central Segment there are approximately 43 rural and 105 urban access points along existing STH 26. The majority of the access points are residential and business driveways located within the City of Jefferson. Approximately 53 public road intersections are included within the Central Segment. Interchanges exist along the Fort Atkinson bypass with Business 26, STH 106, USH 12, and Business 26 again on the north side of Fort Atkinson. Currently, there are two at-grade intersections located along the bypass at Banker and Hoard Roads. The Fort Atkinson Bypass EIS stated that when the bypass is upgraded to four lanes, these two intersections would be grade separated. In Jefferson, an at-grade intersection is located with USH 18 (Racine Street).

In the 17.2-mile (27.7-km) North Segment there are approximately 136 rural and 135 urban access points from Baneck Lane north of Johnson Creek, to STH 60 East north of Watertown. The most common type

of access is residential driveways within the City of Watertown, followed by farms and field driveways located within the rural sections of the North Segment. Numerous public road intersections exist within Watertown, including STH 19. An interchange at STH 16 is located on the north limits of Watertown as well as 8 miles (13 km) north of Watertown. STH 16 travels on STH 26 between these two interchanges. A summary of the existing access to STH 26 in the rural and urban segments is provided in Tables 1.3.4.5-1 and 1.3.4.5-2.

TABLE 1.3.4.5-1
EXISTING ACCESS TO STH 26 – RURAL SEGMENTS

Type of Access	South Segment	Central Segment	North Segment	Total
	Janesville to Milton & Milton to Fort Atkinson	Fort Atkinson to Jefferson & Jefferson to Johnson Creek	Johnson Creek to Watertown & Watertown to STH 60 East	
State Trunk / US Highways	0	2	3	5
County Trunk Highways	3	0	3	6
Local Roads / Streets	15	11	19	45
Commercial Entrances	8	6	27	41
Residential / Farm Entrances	39	11	55	105
Field Entrances	17	13	29	59
TOTAL	82	43	136	261

TABLE 1.3.4.5-2
EXISTING ACCESS TO STH 26 – URBAN SEGMENTS

Type of Access	South Segment	Central Segment		North Segment	Total
	Milton	Jefferson	Johnson Creek	Watertown	
Signalized Intersections	1	4	3	6	14
Stop Sign Control on STH 26	0	0	0	0	0
Interstate Interchange – Signals @ Ramps	0	0	2	0	2
Other Public Road Intersections	9	27	5	20	61
Commercial Entrances	11	28	0	32	71
Residential / Farm Entrances	43	35	2	77	157
TOTAL	64	94	12	135	305

1.3.5 Crashes and Safety

Crashes along STH 26 were evaluated for the 5-year period 1994 through 1998. The route was divided into rural and urban sections within each of the three corridor segments – South, Central, and North. Approximate crash locations were plotted to identify possible high crash locations. Table 1.3.5-1 shows a summary of the number of crashes that occurred on STH 26 from 1994 through 1998. The crash rates on

TABLE 1.3.5-1
STH 26 CRASH SUMMARY 1994 - 1998 (Excluding Animals)

Year and Crash Type		South Segment			Central Segment					North Segment			Total Project Crashes Per Year
		Janesville to Milton	Milton	Milton to Ft. Atkinson Bypass	Fort Atkinson Bypass	Ft. Atkinson Bypass to Jefferson	Jefferson	Jefferson to Johnson Creek	Johnson Creek	Johnson Creek to Watertown	Watertown	Watertown to STH 60 East	
		Rural	Urban	Rural	Rural	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	
		3.5 Miles	1.5 Miles	8.2 Miles	6.0 Miles	2.9 Miles	2.1 Miles	4.5 Miles	0.8 Miles	5.9 Miles	3.2 Miles	10.1 Miles	48.7 Miles
1994	Property Damage	23	8	11	N/A	5	40	8	12	2	73	18	200
	Injury Crashes	14	2	4	N/A	3	21	4	5	2	31	13	99
	Fatality Crashes	1	0	1	N/A	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	5
	Total Crashes	**38**	**10**	**16**	N/A	**9**	**61**	**12**	**17**	**4**	**104**	**33**	**304**
	Total Injuries	27	3	8	N/A	11	29	6	10	6	40	28	168
	Total Fatalities	1	0	1	N/A	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	5
1995	Property Damage	27	12	10	N/A	3	32	9	14	17	74	11	209
	Injury Crashes	17	3	7	N/A	3	24	6	6	3	27	13	109
	Fatality Crashes	0	0	0	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total Crashes	**44**	**15**	**17**	N/A	**6**	**56**	**15**	**20**	**20**	**101**	**24**	**318**
	Total Injuries	29	4	13	N/A	4	39	10	10	6	35	27	177
	Total Fatalities	0	0	0	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1996	Property Damage	20	7	7	N/A	4	25	1	4	4	47	13	132
	Injury Crashes	13	2	11	N/A	0	8	2	2	2	23	14	77
	Fatality Crashes	3	0	0	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	5
	Total Crashes	**36**	**9**	**18**	N/A	**4**	**33**	**3**	**6**	**6**	**70**	**29**	**214**
	Total Injuries	27	2	18	N/A	0	11	2	3	3	32	25	123
	Total Fatalities	5	0	0	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	7
1997	Property Damage	15	2	10	4	1	39	3	6	9	53	20	162
	Injury Crashes	9	4	12	3	1	11	4	6	5	20	12	87
	Fatality Crashes	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total Crashes	**24**	**6**	**22**	**7**	**2**	**50**	**7**	**12**	**14**	**73**	**32**	**249**
	Total Injuries	18	5	18	6	1	15	5	14	6	31	17	136
	Total Fatalities	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1998	Property Damage	19	4	7	8	1	29	0	21	5	49	10	153
	Injury Crashes	17	2	9	5	0	12	3	10	8	24	8	98
	Fatality Crashes	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	3
	Total Crashes	**36**	**6**	**16**	**14**	**1**	**41**	**3**	**31**	**15**	**73**	**18**	**254**
	Total Injuries	30	2	20	12	0	23	5	24	15	37	14	182
	Total Fatalities	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	3
5-Year Totals	Property Damage	104	33	45	N/A	14	165	21	57	37	296	72	844
	Injury Crashes	70	13	43	N/A	7	76	19	29	20	125	60	462
	Fatality Crashes	4	0	1	N/A	1	0	0	0	2	0	4	12
	Total Crashes	**178**	**46**	**89**	**N/A**	**22**	**241**	**40**	**86**	**59**	**421**	**136**	**1318**
	Total Injuries	131	16	77	N/A	16	117	28	61	36	175	111	768
	Total Fatalities	6	0	1	N/A	1	0	0	0	2	0	4	14

Source: Wisconsin Department of Transportation

N/A: The Fort Atkinson bypass was not completed until 1996. 1997 is the first complete year for crash data.

STH 26 per 100 million-vehicle miles (161 million-vehicle km) were compared to the statewide average for similar highways in the South Segment (Table 1.3.5-2), the Central Segment (Table 1.3.5-3), and the North Segment (Table 1.3.5-4).

Access points, including residential and commercial entrances and public roads substantially affect the safety and traffic flow on a highway. Most crashes occur near access points due to vehicles accelerating, decelerating, or crossing the flow of traffic. Time gaps between vehicles decrease as traffic volumes increase. When few gaps exist in the mainline traffic stream, entry onto or across the highway from side roads becomes difficult and dangerous. Where access points are closely spaced, and as traffic volumes increase, highway-running speeds are reduced.

Crash rates on STH 26 are particularly high in the urban areas of Jefferson, Johnson Creek, and Watertown, as well as in the rural section between Janesville and Milton prior to the 4-lane improvement in 1999. These areas exceeded the statewide average crash rate in each of the years 1994 through 1998 with the exception of Jefferson and Johnson Creek in 1996. A high number of access points and intersections contribute to the high crash rates in these areas.

Intersections having a high number of crashes were identified. High crash locations in urban areas occurred in Jefferson at Collins Road, Dane Street, USH 18, and Puerner Street; in Johnson Creek at CTH B and IH 94 ramps; and in Watertown at CTH Y, Stimpson Street, Bernard Street, Milwaukee Street, and STH 19. Bernard Street and STH 19 experienced 83 and 79 crashes, respectively, over the five-year period. High crash locations in rural areas occurred at IH 90 ramps, CTH Y, Bingham Road, and Townline Road from Janesville to Milton (prior to 1999 improvement), and CTH N north of Milton. CTH N experienced 29 crashes in the five-year period.

A total of 14 fatalities occurred within the study area from 1994 through 1998. Six of these fatalities occurred between Janesville and Milton and four of the fatalities occurred between Watertown and STH 60 East.

TABLE 1.3.5-2
SOUTH SEGMENT STH 26 CRASH RATES 1994-1998 (Excluding Animals)
(PER 100 MILLION-VEHICLE MILES)

Year	Janesville to Milton	Milton	Milton to Fort Atkinson Bypass	Statewide Average Crash Rates	
	3.5 Miles	1.5 Miles	8.2 Miles	Rural	Urban
	Rural	Urban	Rural		
1994	***285***	159	81	140	345
1995	***305***	237	79	136	359
1996	***232***	142	78	132	349
1997	***144***	94	89	122	307
1998	***203***	93	61	111	288

Bold Italics: Exceeded Statewide Average
Note: Janesville to Milton was improved in 1999 to a four-lane divided highway.

TABLE 1.3.5-3
CENTRAL SEGMENT STH 26 CRASH RATES 1994-1998 (Excluding Animals)
(PER 100 MILLION-VEHICLE MILES)

Year	Fort Atkinson Bypass	Fort Atkinson Bypass to Jefferson	Jefferson	Jefferson to Johnson Creek	Johnson Creek	Statewide Average Crash Rates	
	6.0 Miles	2.9 Miles	2.1 Miles	4.5 Miles	0.8 Miles	Rural	Urban
	Rural	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban		
1994	N/A	85	***488***	77	***506***	140	345
1995	N/A	56	***443***	93	***582***	136	359
1996	N/A	36	258	18	171	132	349
1997	51	18	***387***	41	***334***	122	307
1998	100	9	***314***	17	***845***	111	288

Bold Italics: Exceeded Statewide Average
N/A: The Fort Atkinson Bypass was not completed until 1996. 1997 is the first complete year for crash data.
Note: Johnson Creek was improved in 2001-2002 as a four-lane divided highway.

TABLE 1.3.5-4
NORTH SEGMENT STH 26 CRASH RATES 1994-1998 (Excluding Animals)
(PER 100 MILLION-VEHICLE MILES)

Year	Johnson Creek to Watertown	Watertown	Watertown to STH 60 East	Statewide Average Crash Rates	
	5.9 Miles	3.2 Miles	10.1 Miles	Rural	Urban
	Rural	Urban	Rural		
1994	19	***680***	126	140	345
1995	94	***617***	88	136	359
1996	28	***402***	103	132	349
1997	64	***395***	109	122	307
1998	69	***373***	59	111	288

Bold Italics: Exceeded Statewide Average
Source: WisDOT
Note: Watertown south of STH 19 was improved in 2003 as a four-lane divided highway.

1.3.6 Modal Relationships

Within the project corridor, the area is deficient in the availability of alternative transportation modes, primarily due to the rural agricultural nature of the surrounding area and the density and size of the area population. The surrounding area is, therefore, dependent upon the STH 26 corridor to function as a link for providing access to these alternative facilities.

Inter city bus service on STH 26 is currently limited to charters. However, Badger Coaches, Inc. (also known as Badger Bus) provides eight daily buses between Madison and Milwaukee on IH 94. Van Galder Bus Company operates 19 daily buses on IH 90 between Madison and O'Hare Airport in Chicago, each with a scheduled stop in Janesville. Van Galder Bus Company also operates 4 daily bus trips between Madison and downtown Chicago, each with a scheduled stop in Janesville. Greyhound provides 5 daily

bus runs on IH 90 between Madison and Rockford, Illinois with 3 of them stopping in Janesville. Greyhound also operates 5 daily buses on IH 94 between Madison and Milwaukee.

Rail passenger service between Janesville and Chicago was started in April 2000. The Lake County Limited leaves Janesville at 6:00 am daily and makes a return trip leaving Chicago at 8:15 pm. In addition to passengers, mail and express freight can be accommodated. Amtrak is responsible for the service, and the trains run on tracks owned by the Wisconsin and Southern Railroad Company.

Wisconsin, along with a consortium of other Midwest states and the federal government is planning a network of high-speed passenger rail lines extending from a Chicago hub. Potential station sites include Watertown, Milwaukee, and Madison.

STH 26 functions as the major connector to these inter city bus and rail passenger services for Milton, Ft. Atkinson, Jefferson, Johnson Creek, and Watertown. A park-and-ride lot was constructed in 2001-2002 for STH 26 and IH 94 at Johnson Creek, with provisions being made to accommodate inter city bus service. Planning for additional park-and-ride facilities in the Janesville area is also being considered.

Freight rail service is provided within the project area by three rail lines. The Wisconsin and Southern Railroad Company provides freight service to Milton. The Union Pacific Railroad provides freight service to Jefferson, Johnson Creek, Watertown, and Clyman Junction. The Canadian Pacific Rail System (Soo Line Railroad) provides freight service to Watertown. STH 26 functions as a direct link to each of these communities.

STH 26 connects with IH 94 at Johnson Creek, and IH 90 at Janesville, and provides the area with a direct link to the urban centers of Madison, Milwaukee, and Janesville where a variety of transportation alternatives exist. Specifically, inter city bus and passenger rail facilities exist at Janesville. Inter city bus, rail freight, and national commercial air transportation service facilities exist at Madison and Milwaukee. In addition, rail passenger service facilities and port facilities exist at Milwaukee.

1.3.7 Transportation Planning History and Local Interest

1.3.7.1 Transportation Planning History

Statewide, areawide and community plans for the area support the need for and show the long-term interest in improvement of the existing STH 26 corridor as a multilane facility. A summary of the planning history regarding STH 26 follows.

In the 1960's, community development planning was active under the federal "701" Planning Assistance Program. The 1966 *Jefferson County Comprehensive Plan* classified STH 26 as a Primary Arterial route connecting the Rock and Fox River valleys. The *Janesville Areawide Transportation Plan* recommended that STH 26 be reconstructed to a limited access multilane highway. The City of Milton's Plan proposed an easterly STH 26 bypass. The 1965 *Fort Atkinson Master Plan* proposed a STH 26 bypass to the west of the city. The 1970 City of Jefferson Plan indicated an easterly bypass of that community, and the Village of Johnson Creek Plan showed an improved STH 26 along the existing route.

In 1973, Janesville, Fort Atkinson, and Watertown passed resolutions that called for relocation of STH 26 outside their urban areas. The Jefferson and Rock County Boards passed similar resolutions, requesting relocation and reconstruction of STH 26 to freeway standards. The Town of Jefferson went on record opposing relocation within that Township.

In 1973, WisDOT undertook a corridor study for the eventual improvement of STH 26. This study was done in cooperation with a Citizens Steering Committee established by the Rock and Jefferson County Boards. The Committee membership consisted of seven members from each county, representing local units of government, farming, conservation and environment, industry, commerce, and tourism interests. Among the findings the Committee adopted were the following:

- Upgrading the existing highway, where feasible, to provide a four-lane facility appears to be the most acceptable and least environmentally disruptive of the available alternatives.
- Bypassing urban areas appears warranted as an ultimate plan to provide relief of the urban street network, continuity of the arterial route, consistency in the level of service, and directness of travel for through traffic.

In response to recommendations of the Steering Committee, WisDOT conducted a traffic origin-destination study during the summer of 1974 that covered approximately 39 miles (63 km) of STH 26 from Interstate 90 at Janesville to STH 16 north of Watertown. In addition, they held public meetings and conducted an attitudinal survey that indicated support for community bypasses.

In 1975, general project concepts were developed for the STH 26 corridor from Janesville to Watertown. These concepts included developing a four-lane divided highway in sections and stages. Emphasis was placed on close-in bypasses for urban areas with operational congestion problems, and upgrading the roadway essentially along the existing alignment for rural areas.

In 1975, WisDOT prepared a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the STH 26 corridor between Janesville and Watertown. Due to changes in funding priorities, however, these earlier, formalized efforts were terminated.

Interest in a STH 26 bypass of Fort Atkinson was renewed in the early 1980's. As a result, in June 1987, WisDOT hired a consulting firm to conduct an environmental impact study for a Fort Atkinson bypass. In July 1991, an Environmental Impact Statement was completed for a four-lane STH 26 bypass of Fort Atkinson. Implementation of the bypass involved initial two-lane construction that was completed in 1995. Right-of-way for the entire four-lane roadway and interchanges was purchased at the outset to preserve the corridor and to allow orderly development until traffic warranted additional lanes.

In March 1989, WisDOT submitted the *Corridors 2020* plan for a statewide network of improved and existing facilities comprised of two elements: 1) a 1,550-mile (2,500-km) backbone system of multilane divided highways interconnecting all regions and major economic centers in the state and tying them to the national transportation network; and 2) a 2,100-mile (3,380-km) system of two and four lane high quality connectors directly linking other significant economic and tourism centers to the backbone system. STH 26 is designated as a Connector route in the *Corridors 2020* plan.

In August 1989, WisDOT adopted a statewide plan for managing access on the State highway system. This plan was updated in 1996. The purpose of the plan is to set forth policies and guidelines that will maintain a high level of service for through traffic while providing reasonable access to abutting properties. STH 26 was designated as a corridor on the statewide plan on which managed access is essential to maintain the required high level of service.

In March 1993, WisDOT initiated Translinks 21, a comprehensive planning process that responded to federal mandates in the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) in shaping an

integrated, multimodal transportation blueprint for the future. As part of the research and analysis to develop a transportation blueprint for Wisconsin, Translinks 21 undertook a review and update of *Corridors 2020*. The findings confirmed that STH 26 is an important Connector component of *Corridors 2020* and continues to be needed as an essential part of Wisconsin's transportation system in the 21st century.

In 1994, the City of Jefferson established a local bypass committee to ascertain the need for a bypass and citizenry support. WisDOT conducted an Origin-Destination Survey for Jefferson in 1995 in response to the City's interest in the bypass study. In 1996, WisDOT completed a bypass feasibility study, concluding feasibility and support for a bypass and recommending continuation with a full environmental and corridor study. In March 1996, City of Jefferson officials requested WisDOT study a STH 26 bypass of the city.

In 1997, WisDOT studied improvement options for the STH 26/IH 94 Interchange area at Johnson Creek. A comprehensive traffic study of the area was included to address the growing development rapidly occurring near the interchange. Results of the study concluded the need for improving a 2.7 mile (4.4 km) section of STH 26 at Johnson Creek between CTH Y and Baneck Lane from a two-lane rural roadway to a four-lane divided highway. The STH 26/IH 94 interchange was modified to accommodate the expansion of STH 26 and anticipated traffic growth in the area, and includes a new underpass under IH 94. The improvement was constructed in 2001-2002.

On August 12, 1997, Johnson Creek adopted The Village of Johnson Creek, Wisconsin, Comprehensive Master Plan Update. This plan supports expanding STH 26 from 2 lanes to 4 lanes north and south of the Interstate.

On September 23, 1997, Fort Atkinson adopted the Fort Atkinson Master Plan Update. This plan recognizes that a future STH 26 Bypass of the City of Jefferson was expected to connect to the north end of the Fort Atkinson Bypass.

On June 16, 1998, Jefferson adopted the City of Jefferson Comprehensive Master Plan. This plan recommended that the City work closely with WisDOT to plan for the proposed STH 26 bypass route so that the facility fulfills and need requirements and is consistent with the other recommendations of the Plan. The City's Comprehensive Master Plan does not recognize a specific route for a potential Jefferson bypass, but does recognize that in the recent past, the city council has taken a position in support of a bypass in concept.

In August 1998, WisDOT's Highways Programming Committee recommended undertaking a full location and environmental study for a Jefferson bypass and the addition of two lanes between Fort Atkinson and Watertown.

In November 1998, the Watertown Common Council adopted a resolution for inclusion in corridor and environmental impact studies for improvements to STH 26 in the Watertown area.

In February 1999, WisDOT contracted with Earth Tech, Inc., to begin a corridor and environmental impact study for the STH 26 corridor from Interstate 90 at Janesville to STH 60 (East) north of Watertown.

The Dodge County Plan was adopted by the Dodge County Board of Supervisor's Planning and Development Committee on April 20, 1999. This plan supports a westside bypass for the City of Watertown.

On June 21, 1999, Milton adopted the City of Milton Comprehensive Plan. This plan recognizes that increasing traffic volumes on STH 26 will likely warrant expansion of that highway in the Milton area within its planning period and that WisDOT should consider alternatives for improvement of STH 26 through or around the City of Milton.

The Jefferson County Agricultural Preservation and Land Use Plan was adopted in October 1999. The Transportation Overview section of the County plan indicates that over the next twenty-year planning period, construction of a STH 26 bypass is one of the key new highway construction projects proposed by WisDOT.

The Watertown Plan Commission adopted the City of Watertown Comprehensive Master Plan in February 2000. The plan recognizes that STH 26 has been experiencing increasing traffic volumes that warrant transportation improvements in Watertown. The plan notes that past discussions regarding a potential STH 26 bypass around the city have primarily focused on a westerly bypass in light of significant environmental constraints east of the city, i.e., wetlands, Rock River, and tight drumlin terrain alignments.

The Wisconsin State Highway Plan was adopted in February 2000, and includes *Corridors 2020* as part of its plan. In the State Highway Plan, STH 26 between Milton and Watertown is noted as a *Corridors 2020* Connector route with Severe to Moderate Congestion levels if no capacity expansion occurs. The plan identifies the Milton to Watertown segment of STH 26 as a potential Major Project.

1.3.7.2 Public Information Meetings/Public Hearing

Eight sets of public information meetings (PIMs) and a set of Public Hearings were held to present corridor alternatives and to solicit public input. The meetings were announced through news releases to area newspapers, radio and television stations, project newsletters, and notices mailed to potentially affected property owners. For convenience to the general public, the first and second series of public information meetings and the series of Public Hearings were held at three different locations on three separate dates. The three locations were in the cities of Milton, Jefferson, and Watertown, with the same information presented at each location.

Meetings were conducted in an "open house" format from either 4:00 to 8:00pm or 5:00 to 9:00pm. The first set of PIMs included a brief presentation on the study and a public question and answer session. The second set of PIMs had a video that provided a study overview for the public on continuous display. Both sets of PIMs and Public Hearings had staff members from the consultant team and WisDOT, including real estate personnel, available to discuss the project at each of the meetings. The Public Hearings also had court reporters available to transcribe public testimony.

In addition to the two PIMs and Public Hearings held to review study alternatives, another third PIM was held to review archaeological and historic resources. This latter meeting was held to give the public an opportunity to learn the results of preliminary archaeological and historic studies along the STH 26 alternative corridors and to comment on them. The fourth through eight PIMs were held in local communities to provide the public an opportunity to comment on alternatives or modifications to alternatives that occurred since the Public Hearings.

Comments from these meetings are discussed in detail in Section VII, Comments and Coordination.

1.3.7.3 Study Committees

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation established study committees for each of the three study area segments to facilitate development and consideration of alternatives, and to better address local and other concerns. Each county, city, village, and town with potential to be directly affected by corridor alternatives was asked to recommend up to three representatives to serve on one or more study committees. All recommended individuals, including many elected officials and technical staff, are study committee members. Study committees also include individuals with special knowledge about historic preservation, the environment and business.

Native American groups were asked about their interest in having representatives on the study committees and declined. The Forest County Potawatomi Community of Wisconsin, the Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin, the Oneida Tribe of Wisconsin, and the Ho-Chunk Nation requested that study committee minutes be provided for their information and were sent minutes by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, Bureau of Environment.

Thirty-three study committee meetings in the various project segments were held in addition to two corridor-wide local officials meetings. Two Native-American consultation meetings were held to review archaeological studies and sites impacted by the project. The first meeting was held March 14, 2003 and was attended by the Oneida and Menominee tribes along with FHWA. The Oneida tribe indicated it no longer had interest in project. The second meeting was held October 15, 2003 and was attended by the Menominee and Sac and Fox tribes along with FHWA and SHPO. Tribes have been consulted on this project and agree to mitigation of impacted archaeological sites.

1.4 SUMMARY OF PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of the project is to provide a safe and efficient transportation corridor having national, state, regional and local importance for STH 26 while minimizing adverse environmental disturbances. STH 26 accommodates the commodity transport of goods and services as a federal and/or state truck route, and provides communities along the corridor with access to local and regional services.

The following is a summary of the key factors influencing the need to improve STH 26 from IH 90 at Janesville to STH 60-East north of Watertown.

- The corridor is of national, state, and regional importance. It is included on the National Highway System (NHS), and is classified as a Principal Arterial. The highway is designated as a federal and/or state long-truck route, and is designated as a Connector route in WisDOT's *Corridors 2020* plan. The route links several communities in an area of high population growth, and provides regional access to schools, health care, and shopping facilities. STH 26 provides the area with direct connection to IHs 90 and 94.

- The route is of local importance. STH 26 is the major north-south urban arterial in several communities serving both through and local traffic. Due to the high volume of through and truck traffic, the local function of this route is hindered, and the route acts as a barrier separating parts of those communities. If the route continues to be congested, then safety, mobility, and economic development will be adversely affected.

- Traffic volumes are high and capacity and level of service (LOS) will decrease in the future. Traffic volumes will increase approximately 85 to 300 percent by the design year 2028 resulting in volumes two to three times higher than the recommended threshold for a two-lane urban or rural roadway. f no action is taken, the LOS will degrade to LOS "E" or LOS "F" for sections being considered for improvements by the year 2028, which will likely result in traffic diversion to local systems and increased safety problems in the corridor and adjacent local road systems.

- The corridor is a significant truck route. Existing truck volumes range from 1,360 vpd in Milton to 2,500 vpd in Jefferson, and account for approximately 11-18 percent of the average daily traffic (ADT). The high truck volumes, particularly in the downtown areas, disrupt traffic flow and increase hazards to traffic as well as pedestrians.

- Crash rates are high along several segments of the existing facility. The STH 26 corridor has a high number of access points, especially in urban areas, and consequently some segments have experienced higher than average crash rates for the five-year period 1994 through 1998 (see Tables 1.3.5-2 to 1.3.5-4). It is likely that crash frequency will increase if no improvements are made to the existing roadway.